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Chairman: Ms. Groux (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Switzerland)

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In the absence of Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine), Ms. Groux (Switzerland), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 101: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/59/41, A/59/41/Corr.1, A/59/184-S/2004/602, A/59/190, A/59/274 and A/59/331)

1. **Mr. Pinheiro** (Independent Expert on violence against children), referring to the state of advancement of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on the question of violence against children requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/138, said that, in his capacity as Independent Expert in charge of the study, he had sought to lay the groundwork to provide an in-depth, comprehensive picture of violence against children, documenting its magnitude, incidence and consequences, and what was known around its causes, with a view to raising awareness of the situation at the national, regional and international levels and presenting clear recommendations on what could be done in order to prevent and combat that phenomenon. The subject of research was physical and mental violence inflicted on girls and boys under 18, particularly the cases of assault and battery, abuse, ill-treatment, exploitation and sexual abuse. The objective was to facilitate understanding the various forms of violence against children, taking into consideration the settings in which the acts of violence had taken place, for instance, the family or the community, schools, care and residential institutions, detention facilities and prisons. Violence against children seeking asylum and those attending a military school was also examined. The possible effects of gender-, race- or origin-based discrimination were evaluated and attention was paid to the factors that could aggravate the risk of violence, such as mental or physical handicaps, poverty and the vulnerability of specific groups of children, particularly migrant, indigenous or minority children.

2. The expertise and research output of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), particularly its Innocenti Research Centre, and the World Health Organization (WHO), the three supporting agencies, had provided a unique opportunity to combine a rights-based, child-protection and public health approach to the study. There had been cooperation with other entities, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), and an effort to create linkages with regional bodies, such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States (OAS). Close contact was maintained with the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and work was done in tandem with relevant special rapporteurs. An analysis of reports to and of the CRC Committee as well as those of the special procedures mandate holders of the Commission on Human Rights had been initiated.

3. One of the speaker's objectives in directing the study was to provoke a comprehensive national consideration of violence against children in as many Member States as possible. In March 2004, he had circulated a questionnaire to Member States calling for information on the issue and 65 governments had provided answers to the questionnaire so far. The early impression created by the responses was that much was being done to prevent and respond to violence against children, and that there were many examples of commendable practices, although some important issues still needed to be resolved, especially with regard to violence in the private sphere. Regional, subregional and national dialogue, an element that was important for the process of the study, would serve as a framework for compiling information, drawing greater attention to the problem and mobilizing the resources and political will necessary for alleviating it. Further regional consultations would be held in the first semester of 2005 and their outcome would depend on the degree of participation of governments, parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society entities, particularly human-rights organizations. NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) had provided essential advice and guidance for the study and had supported its development from the start. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) had also expressed willingness to contribute to the research.

4. In view of the request expressed in various General Assembly resolutions to encourage the participation of children as a function of their age and maturity, an effort was made to ensure a significant and substantial involvement of children in all stages of the study. Although that was one of the most delicate aspects of the work, because it implied grappling with ethical considerations, particularly in terms of confidentiality, security and acceptance by the parents and the community, the example of the special session

of the General Assembly on children had shown that the participation of children could have very positive effects. Various NGOs had focused on child participation in the study, in particular so that strategies developed by children themselves to confront violence against children could be highlighted.

5. The Secretary-General's study on violence against children provided an opportunity to bring that violence to the forefront, particularly at the international level, and to identify approaches that could be successful in preventing and reacting to that disturbing reality. It provided a process in which governments could acknowledge their responsibility to put in place effective legislation and policies to prevent and confront violence against children. No provision had been made in the regular budget with respect to the study, and it relied on voluntary contributions. Several governments had been very generous in that regard and their contributions had permitted to set up a small secretariat in Geneva to support the work. In 2005, a substantive progress report on the study would be presented to the Commission on Human Rights and it was scheduled to present the study to the Commission on Human Rights at its sixty-second session in 2006. What the Secretary-General expected the document to be was not an academic study but one that would provide specific tools to prevent and combat all forms of violence against children. The speaker was confident that it would be a dynamic force for change, not only during its preparation and when it would be discussed, but also after it would have been completed and the national, regional and international bodies would establish follow-up mechanisms to track the implementation of the study's recommendations.

6. **Mr. Hof** (Netherlands) enquired as to any links between the preparation of the study and the preparation of other studies of the Secretary-General that were in progress, particularly the one on violence against women, which would be presented to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, and the reports on the implementation of the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, since it was reasonable to suppose that those reports contained information common to all three, for instance information on violence against girls, which implied that good communication between those responsible for drawing them up was fundamental. The speaker also asked the Independent Expert how he planned to address the issue of intra-family violence against children. He also requested details on the work of the secretariat of the study and its interaction and cooperation with the participating agencies and on the availability of funds for the conduct of the study. Since the Independent Expert had referred to the involvement of parliamentarians or national parliaments in the preparation of the study, he asked for specifics about how that cooperation would develop. From a broader viewpoint, he also wished to know what measures had been adopted or would be adopted to ensure that universally accepted human-rights standards would form the basis and the framework of the study.

7. **Mr. Pinheiro** (Independent Expert on violence against children) replied that the preparation of the study required many ongoing contacts and discussions, because it was supported by three agencies that represented each a different basic approach: OHCHR had a rights-based approach, WHO a public health approach and UNICEF a child-protection approach. Regarding linkages between the study and other related reports, he maintained close contact with the Independent Expert in charge of the in-depth study on violence against women, with whom he coordinated activities and interchanged information that had enriched both studies. That also applied to the follow-up report on the outcomes of the special session on children.

8. Regarding domestic violence, it was necessary to overcome the barriers of family intimacy through better legislation and services to the community. The responses of a number of States contained examples of good practices regarding legal measures that could allow entry into that intimate area. The attitude of the community towards children should change and that would prompt a change of attitude in the families.

9. The size of the secretariat was modest. It practically consisted of three civil servants detached from the three supporting agencies. With regard to funding, the speaker thanked Canada and Switzerland for their support. He underscored that funds were available for the work only during the current year but not for the two following two years. The need for financial support was highlighted by the expenses relating to nine regional consultations that had been scheduled, which would total approximately US$1 million, a sum that would mainly defray the costs of the participation of NGOs, experts and, above all,

children and adolescents. Regarding relations with parliaments and parliamentarians, the speaker was in contact with parliamentary representatives, especially in relation to the regional consultations. The Inter-Parliamentary Union offered to link up the study with the work of a network of more than 100 parliamentary human-rights committees worldwide.

10. **Mr. Cumberbatch** (Cuba) asked the Independent Expert whether there were plans to address the role of the media in the study, since, in the current context of globalization, terrible scenes of violence against children were broadcast on a daily basis. His delegation was of the opinion that the media should play a role in promoting tolerance and protect the rights of the child, enshrined in the major human-rights instruments.

11. **Mr. Pinheiro** (Independent Expert on violence against children) said that in fact that was a key subject, since there was a relation between the media and violence. Much research had been done on the subject, particularly on violence and the electronic media. A meeting had been held in Buenos Aires with all directors of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Latin America and the Caribbean and the issue had been considered very important. Consequently, the answer to the question of Cuba was affirmative and hopefully the media would participate in subsequent stages of the work and relevant consultations with regional experts would take place.

12. **Ms. Bakker** (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia, the countries of the stabilisation and association process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and the EFTA country Iceland and Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, which aligned themselves with the statement, said that during the special session on children, held in May 2002, children had pointed out the harsh reality of the lives of millions of children in the world. They had shown that the situation had not changed substantially since the World Summit for Children (WSC), called together fourteen years earlier. They had demanded urgent action to make the world more "fit for children".

13. Although the almost universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had led to significant progress in a number of areas during the past decade, for millions of children in the world the rights set forth in the Convention were only a dream. New threats had emerged, creating additional obstacles for the full realisation of the child's rights. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has left millions of children orphaned, abandoned and neglected. According to the report entitled "Children on the Brink", produced jointly by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in just two years' time the global number of orphans due to AIDS had increased from 11.5 million to 15 million. About 30,000 children under five died every day. For countless more, their childhood development was arrested, when they were in one way or another deprived of the love, care, health care, nutrition and protection that they needed in order to grow and learn. Millions lived in abject poverty, suffering from malnutrition, lack of health care and immunisation, safe drinking water, sanitation and education; and millions were deprived because of armed conflict, exploitation and discrimination.

14. The international community had committed itself to implementing the outcome document "A World fit for Children". The European Union believed that it was necessary to accelerate the efforts and to develop initiatives that truly had an impact on the lives of children, especially those already marginalized and disadvantaged by their poverty, disability, ethnic origin, gender or social status. Participation of children was vital. Children had a right to be listened to, to be taken into account on issues affecting their lives and to play an active role and express their opinions in the community and in their society. Because of commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), "business as usual" was not an option and there was no choice other than stepping up initiatives to reach agreed goals and targets. In that connection, the European Union was prepared to highlight some priorities.

15. The *European Union stressed the importance of* the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by 192 countries, and all of its Optional Protocols, as the broad normative framework regarding the rights of children, and appealed to the States that had not yet done so to sign and ratify the Convention and its

Protocols. It also urged the States that had formulated reserves to review and withdraw them.

16. The European Union noted the importance of the work accomplished by the Committee for the Rights of the Child (CRC), engaged in monitoring the situation of children and presenting recommendations to the States parties, and welcomed its general comments, aimed at guiding the States parties in implementing the Convention and Its Optional Protocols. It was essential that the Committee should continue to seek ways of raising awareness of the Convention's principles and provisions and to organize general debates, such as the one held in September on the implementation of the rights of the child in early childhood. The European Union believed that thematic exchanges would assist and encourage States to formulate and implement policies on children.

17. The European Union welcomed the recent cooperation between the CRC Committee, UNICEF and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in providing technical assistance to governments for enacting laws and adopting policies reflecting the Committee's comments. It also supported the initiative of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) to include an approach based on the human rights of the child in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and in the country programmes. Moreover, the European Union was prepared to study the Committee's proposal to use two rooms for greater efficiency and to reduce the current backlog of reports to be reviewed.

18. Improving the situation of children affected by armed conflict was vital. Some examples of that commitment were the adoption in the past year of guidelines on children and armed conflict with a view to helping them through practical measures, and the work of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office, which in 2003 had financed projects of therapeutic feeding, immunization, primary education and reintegration of child soldiers of a total cost of €85.7 million. *In fact, children had been a priority for* the Office for some years because there were particularly vulnerable to humanitarian crises.

19. As a result of armed conflicts in the past decade, 2 million children were dead and 6 million maimed. Armed conflict affected the lives of many more: It deprived them of parents, basic social services, health care and education. There were some twenty million displaced and refugee children, while others were held hostage, had been abducted, sexually abused or exploited or have fallen victim to traffickers in human beings. It was estimated that at least three hundred thousand child soldiers were participating in armed conflicts all over the world.

20. In view of that serious situation, the European Union welcomed the efforts undertaken by the United Nations to mainstream the focus children victims of armed conflict, particularly Security Council resolution 1539 (2000), and called upon all Member States to reflect on and build upon that resolution. The European Union looked forward to the action plan for a systematic and comprehensive monitoring and reporting system. It also looked forward to an early appointment of focal-points at country level to contact parties to armed conflict regarding compliance with the resolutions calling for an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. The European Union supported the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and all those active endeavouring to relieve the suffering of the children concerned. Furthermore, the European Union urged member States to sign and ratify international instruments aimed at the protection of children affected by armed conflict, and in particular the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

21. The European Union reaffirmed its strong commitment to the agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) of 1994 and stressed that sexual and reproductive rights and health care were essential to the fight against HIV/AIDS, poverty, maternal and child mortality and the attainment of the MDGs. It fully supported CRC General comment No. 3 on HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child.

22. The rights of young people concerning their own sexual and reproductive health were still too frequently ignored or overlooked. Acknowledging the important work carried out by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF in raising awareness among young people and adolescents and enhancing their access to information and services, the European Union called upon governments to fulfil their responsibility by increasing contributions to enable those bodies to continue and expand their operations.

23. Since millions of children lived in poverty, had no access to education and many of them were forced into the worst forms of child labour and other types of exploitation, such as trafficking, prostitution, pornography, acts of paedophilia, sexual abuse and harassment, which also represented a risk in situations of armed conflict, the European Union stressed that education was a key element in alleviating poverty. Consequently, it urged States to take the measures that were necessary for eliminating obstacles to the full enjoyment of the right to education, particularly by girls, and to include education in the response to emergency and conflict situations.

24. Since States were responsible for protecting the rights of the child, the European Union urged governments that had not yet done so to ratify and implement the Optional Protocol on sale of children, child prostitution and pornography and Conventions No. 138 and No. 182 of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Those problems continued to be priorities for the European Union and it would further implement programmes aimed at alleviating those forms of hardship, particularly Dapne II and AGIS. It would also combat trafficking in children through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In that regard, it welcomed the work of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and urged the States to offer him their cooperation.

25. Since unfortunately there were many other forms of violence against children and since States had an explicit obligation to protect them, it was necessary to deal in the most open and transparent way with the problem of physical and mental violence against children within the household and the family. The European Union fully supported the work of Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, Independent Expert, in relation to the international study on violence against children and believed firmly that the study would contribute to the development of innovative approaches to preventing and combating all forms of violence against children. It welcomed in particular the fact that the Independent Expert had ensured the participation of a broad range of stakeholders in the preparatory stage and, especially, the emphasis that he had put on eliciting the views and encouraging the active participation of children.

26. Lastly, the abolition of the death penalty was another priority for the European Union. That form of punishment was prohibited by the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), by the CRC (for crimes committed by adolescents under 18) and by resolution 1984/50 of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), endorsed without a vote by the General Assembly. The European Union reiterated its earlier appeals to the Member States to comply with those provisions.

27. **Mr. Andjaba** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), namely, Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and Madagascar, candidate member to SADC, which associated itself with his statement, said that at the special session on children two years earlier, the leaders of the SADC countries had reaffirmed their commitment to complete the unfinished agenda of the World Summit for Children (WSC) and achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through national initiatives and international cooperation. However, it was currently necessary to keep supporting those laudable commitments and to take stock in 2005 of progress made with regard to their implementation.

28. The SADC member States had integrated the commitments of the Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A World Fit for Children" into the existing national plans and poverty reduction strategies and had made considerable progress in improving the lives of children. However, the general situation of children in sub-Saharan Africa remained grave. They were victims of many forms of violence, including child marriages, domestic violence, trafficking of children and sexual exploitation often associated with the spread of HIV/AIDS among young children. According to projections of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 42 percent of children who died before the age of five were from the 18 countries of sub-Saharan Africa, nine of which were SADC member States. Thus, many of those countries still fell short of meeting the targets contained in the Programme of Action adopted at the special session on children.

29. Southern Africa was the epicentre of the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. The statistics continued to reflect levels that had not been registered in any other part of the world. The seven most affected countries in the world were in Southern Africa; they had an adult prevalence ranging from 20 to close to 40 percent.

Accordingly, combating HIV/AIDS was a top priority for SADC, which continued to implement national and regional policies focused on prevention, care and support and on mitigating the socioeconomic impact of this epidemic. In that connection, leaders at the SADC Summit, held in Mauritius in August 2004, had reaffirmed their commitment to address the epidemic as a matter of urgency. Furthermore, the Community was committed to its Addendum on the eradication of violence against women and children, which obliged member States to take specific measures, including the introduction of legal reform, the provision of effective services and the launching of public awareness campaigns.

30. The epidemic represented an extraordinary threat to children in sub-Saharan Africa. Most of the world's 11 million children who had lost one or both parents to AIDS lived in the SADC region. A vast number of children lived with sick and dying family members and are themselves infected with HIV. As a result, they dropped out of school, faced stigma and discrimination and were at risk of exploitation and abuse. The family structures were changing dramatically toward an increasing number of grandparent- and child--headed households. Accordingly, strengthening family- and community-based care and support to orphans and other vulnerable children was high on the SADC agenda. A key challenge facing SADC member States was to design sustainable programmes reaching a significant proportion of orphans and vulnerable children and implement them soon enough to honour the commitments made at the UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS. Currently, a regional policy on orphans and vulnerable children was being developed and would be adopted by the end of 2006.

31. The situation of the girl child gave serious cause for concern. Girls continued to face discrimination, HIV/AIDS, violence, exploitation and neglect. They were more likely to become infected with HIV/AIDS. They often shared the responsibilities of the household and took care of young siblings. A study conducted by International Organization for Migration (IOM) had concluded that girls and young women were especially vulnerable to the recruitment tactics of traffickers.

32. The SADC was highly sensitive to women's rights. In that connection, it focused on the girl child in a bid to break the cycle of harmful social practices and prejudices against women. Only through the adoption of a comprehensive strategy to promote and protect the rights of girls would it be possible to build a shared and lasting approach aimed at promoting women's self-esteem. SADC countries had mainstreamed a gender perspective in most of their policies and legislations.

33. It was estimated that 100 million children worldwide had disabilities, often caused by armed conflicts and political violence. Those children were denied access to education, family life, adequate health care and the right to participate in the normal activities of childhood. Furthermore, they were highly vulnerable to abuse and neglected by the adults responsible for them. The SADC countries, as States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), were concerned over the situation of those children and worked working hard at a national level to ensure that their rights were not violated as a result of their disabilities. The SADC countries were devising strategies that would ensure that children with disabilities were not socially excluded. In the same vein, they supported the proposed Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities and would like it to make specific reference to children.

34. The situation of children in armed conflicts was yet another concern that required specific measures. Generations of children were being killed or wounded physically and emotionally, in violation of human rights instruments, including the CRC. In that regard, SADC thanked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for placing the issues of children affected by armed conflict high on the international agenda.

35. SADC considered the designation of child protection advisers in peacekeeping missions, such as the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), as a positive development ensuring that the protection of children's rights was a priority in peace processes and that children's interests were not marginalized. Programmes for the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child soldiers should be designed in a way precluding re-abduction and recruitment.

36. SADC was seriously concerned over allegations of sexual exploitation by military and civilian personnel of MONUC and urged the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and other United Nations agencies involved to fully investigate those

allegations and take appropriate actions to end such a behaviour. It also urged MONUC to provide further training to its personnel in order to ensure full compliance with its code of conduct regarding sexual misconduct. Lastly, the SADC member States remained committed to the protection and promotion of the rights of children with a view to making the world a better place for future generation.

37. **Mrs. Vigani** (Switzerland) regretted that there had been delays in the presentation of the Secretary-General's report on the comprehensive assessment of the United Nations system response to children affected by armed conflict (A/59/331) and the Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (which had not yet been presented). Regarding the first document, the delegation of Switzerland concurred with the recommendation of the Secretary-General to conduct long-term promotion activities and believed that the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict should in fact focus on such promotion work. Furthermore, Switzerland supported the proposal to establish a mechanism - also specified in Security Council resolution 1539 (2004) - for monitoring and reporting violations and abuses committed against children affected by armed conflict.

38. Regarding the incorporation of issues related to children affected by armed conflict into the activities of the United Nations system, the delegation of Switzerland concurred with the opinion expressed in the report that those issues should not come exclusively within the competence of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and that it was necessary to encourage various agencies and bodies of the system to identify the human and financial resources necessary for incorporating those issues in their programmes.

39. The delegation of Switzerland had tried to reply as exhaustively as possible to the questionnaire transmitted to the States by the Independent Expert on violence against children and hoped that the study would contain substantial proposals enabling the international community to combat violence against children more effectively.

40. **Mr. Nurnberg** (Norway) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was based on the children's right to fully participate in society. For that to become a reality, every effort should be made to ensure children a life in security, protected from the horrors of armed conflict, sexual exploitation and other forms of violence. A strong focus on the girl child was required in that regard. Norway welcomed the initiative taken by the General Assembly to request an in depth study on violence against children. It expected that the study would be useful. Violence against children must never be considered a private matter but was a question of fundamental human rights.

41. Poverty constituted a breeding ground for human rights violations and gave rise to conflict. Conflict, in turn, exacerbated poverty. Children's rights to basic needs, such as health services and education, must be honoured. To that end, political commitment and appropriate resource allocation were needed in order to meet the goals set at the special session of the General Assembly on children. Children's rights and needs would be a cross-cutting theme at the review of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2005.

42. The Secretary-General's report on the comprehensive assessment of the United Nations' response to children affected by armed conflict (A/59/331) provided a good basis for further discussions on how to improve the effectiveness of the UN response to the children affected by armed conflict (CAAC) agenda. In addition to continued vigorous advocacy, an effective monitoring and reporting system on child-rights violations, enhanced mainstreaming and improved coordination across the United Nations system, it was essential to analyze the roles of key United Nations bodies and the division of labour among the various United Nations actors concerned with the CAAC agenda. Furthermore, the interests and perspectives of children and adolescents as major stakeholders should be taken up at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) to be held in Tunis in 2005.

43. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) had proved to be a particularly suitable learning and societal-participation tool for children with disabilities. The Eighth International Congress on Including Children with Disabilities in the Community, which had been hosted by Norway, had demonstrated the importance of contributions by children and adolescents on all issues related to their participation in society.

44. **Ms. Aziz** (Pakistan) said that in recent years the international community had paid increasing attention to the situation of children and women and the governments had recognized that individual well-being was a prerequisite for general economic development, not the inverse. Unfortunately, it had not yet been possible to achieve a world fit for children. They still fell prey to poverty, violence and exploitation. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognized that the protection and promotion of those rights began at home and therefore the institution of the family should be strengthened at the national and international levels.

45. The child was a fundamental element on Pakistan's development agenda. At the federal level, the protection of children's rights came within the competence of the Ministry for Women's Development, Social Welfare and Special Education and the National Commission for Child Welfare and Development, which cooperated closely with United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The Government had launched a national action plan aimed at universalising primary education by 2015, with special emphasis on the education of the girl child, and studied various ways of broadening and improving secondary education. In the health sector, while the resources did not permit extending medical facilities to the entire child population, the Government was taking measures to enhance basic health facilities, family planning and immunization and vaccination programmes. Other measures included a food and nutrition programme focusing on children and mothers and a breastfeeding promotion and protection programme.

46. In the area of justice for minors, a decree based on CRC principles had been enacted in 2000. It had allowed to abolish the death penalty, forced labour and handcuffing in the case of minors; guaranteed them the right to the presence of a lawyer; created courts for minors; protected their intimacy; and provided for freedom on bail for almost all offences committed by minors.

47. With regard to child labour, extensive programmes had been carried out to ensure the identification and rehabilitation of victims with the help of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other international agencies. Moreover, Pakistan was a signatory to the Programme of Stockholm and the Yokohama Global Commitment against the commercial sexual exploitation of children and had drawn up a national plan of action in that regard. Lastly, fully committed to the well-being and development of children through the protection and promotion of their rights, Pakistan had developed a comprehensive national plan of action to ensure the survival, protection and development of children.

48. **Mr. Hannesson** (Iceland), having endorsed the declaration made by the delegation of Netherlands on behalf of the European Union, expressed satisfaction at the Secretary- General's report on Follow-up to the United Nations Special Session on children (A/59/274), which stated that the countries had stepped up their efforts to attain the goals of the special session, but said that much still remained to be done. First and foremost, an end should be put to violence against children, whether a physical or emotional, within or outside the family. The problem was a human rights issue. The Government of Iceland had adopted provisions that made parents responsible for the protection of their children against violence, prohibited corporal punishment and taken measures to improve the care of children that did not live in a family environment.

49. Referring to the issue of children and armed conflicts, Iceland urged States to apply Security Council resolution 1539 (2004) of 22 April 2004 and to fulfil the commitments made in that regard under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols. Concerning the problem of unaccompanied minors, the Government of Iceland had formulated a policy on that issue and continued to be committed to bilateral and multilateral cooperation in that regard. Moreover, a National Committee for UNICEF was established in Iceland in March 2004; it would collect funds for international projects.

50. **Ms. Yeshiki** (Japan) said that in March 2004 the Government of Japan had held a symposium on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) with a view to raising public awareness of CRC. On the issue of children and armed conflicts, the Government of Japan had continued to contribute emergency funds (US$3.64 million) to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) programme of disarming, demobilizing, reintegrating and rehabilitating child soldiers. Moreover, in August 2004, Japan had ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRC on children's participation in armed conflicts. Japan urged all

governments that had not yet done so to ratify the Convention as soon as possible. It was time to move from the promotion to the implementation of international standards with the help of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children in armed conflicts and of UNICEF, and to improve coordination within the United Nations system on the basis of a clear division of tasks. In that regard, the delegation of Japan regretted that there had been a delay in the presentation of the Secretary-General's report on the comprehensive assessment of the United Nations system response to children affected by armed conflict (A/59/331).

51. With regard to trafficking in children, the Government of Japan focused on the protection of the victims and a stricter application of the law. To that end, it had established an inter-agency team responsible for coordinating the fight against that illegal activity. The Government of Japan had cooperated closely with other governments, international organizations and civil society on that issue, hosting, for instance, the second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Yokohama in 2001. It was looking forward to contributing to the Post-Yokohama Mid-Term Review of the East Asia and the Pacific Regional Commitment and Action Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, which would be conducted in Bangkok in November 2004. In that regard, Japan welcomed the appointment of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children, and hoped that his work would promote effective international cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination in order to combat that inhumane activity.

52. The CRC Committee had examined Japan's second periodic report. Japan would consider the recommendations of that body carefully and take any appropriate measures. As the Committee had indicated, Japan was making considerable official development assistance (ODA) contributions, largely on the basis of the concept of human security and of the empowerment of the individual, which would eventually lead to the empowerment of communities. Japan's commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child was linked with that idea.

53. **Ms. Molaroni** (San Marino) stressed that, as the Secretary-General had indicated with regard to the World Conference on Education for All, education was a fundamental right and the basis for building a more advanced and developed society. In that regard, one of the essential measures in favour of children and social progress was to provide to the young a good education on which they could base their lives. Accordingly, San Marino supported fully the millennium goals related to education, namely that by 2015 boys and girls worldwide would complete a full primary-education programme, that by 2005 gender disparities would no longer exist in primary and secondary education and that by 2015 girls and boys would have equal access to all levels of education.

54. Statistics showed that an educated child was less exposed to disease. Hygiene and promotion of health could help save lives, but knowing what vaccinations should be administered and when was equally important. Vaccination constituted the most effective means of combating preventable illnesses and producing a more healthy generation and environment. It should be borne in mind that measles killed one million children every year and malaria one African child every 30 seconds. It was also fundamental to know when food supplements should be administered during a child's development or during the pregnancy, and how to avoid contracting AIDS through abstinence, fidelity and the use of condoms. This last problem was particularly significant, given that there were currently 12 million infected persons aged 15-24 and 2.5 million infected minors under 15.

55. An educated child was also less exposed to violence. An estimated 2 million children practiced prostitution or were used in pornography, while 180 million children were compelled to work in deplorable conditions. Being more alert and aware of what was happening in one's environment and knowing how to react to particularly dangerous situations, knowing, for instance, what a land mine looked like, could saving lives and limbs. San Marino had financed a programme aimed at raising children's awareness of mines, which still significantly affected many regions in the world.

56. An educated child was less likely to practice or be subject to discrimination. It was therefore important to teach children the principle that all human beings were equal, regardless of sex, and that they should be treated in the same way and enjoy the same rights and opportunities, in order to open up their mentality and broaden their perception of reality. Worldwide, 121 million primary-school age children were not enrolled in school; 65 million were girls and 56 million boys.

Achieving gender equality by 2005 and universal primary education by 2015 were two of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were harder to attain.

57. A better educated girl was likely to be a better mother, less likely to die at birth, better informed on how to bring up her children, better fed and better prepared to feed them. She would be more able to improve the quality of her life and the society in which he lived, thereby contributing to development and stability in her country. Lastly, San Marino ascribed great importance to free education for all and urged all countries to comply with the Millennium Declaration recommendation that all people worldwide should have access to affordable education.

58. **Ms. Al-Malki** (Qatar) said that in Qatar childhood affairs were considered to be one of the focal interests for policy makers and planners. Under the Constitution, the State was to care for the youth and protect them from corruption, exploitation and ill-treatment. Accordingly, Qatar was determined to defend children's rights, enshrined in the international, Arab and Islamic conventions, and provide an environment conducive to a child's social, psychological and educational development. Qatar had submitted its first national report under Article 12 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) - the protocol on sale of children, child prostitution and pornography; and would prepare a national plan for children based on the goals stated in the outcome of the special session on children, entitled "A World Fit for Children". Moreover, Qatar had disseminated the CRC principles and provisions among adults and children through training courses, publication of the text and integration of the CRC concepts into the educational system with a view to creating a generation aware of its own rights and basic freedoms.

59. Among other measures undertaken with a view to building civil-society institutions, Qatar, under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al-Misnad, the First Lady, and the President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, had set up the Qatari Foundation for the Protection of Women and Children, the Qatari Orphan Foundation and the Cultural Centre for Motherhood and Childhood. Furthermore, Qatar was committed to ending all forms of violence against children and to ensuring that their education would not be interrupted by instability and war.

60. **Mr. Sun Jin** (China) said that the United Nations and the national governments had made enormous efforts and achieved remarkable results in terms of promoting and protecting the rights of the child. At the same time, it should be recognized that acts in violation of the rights of the child such as war and armed conflicts, poverty, diseases, violence, sexual abuse, exploitation and terrorism continued to undermine the rights of the child. The Chinese government strongly condemned terrorist acts targeting children. The international community should strengthen cooperation and take effective measures to eliminate the problems that prevented the establishment of an environment conducive to the healthy growth of children worldwide.

61. There were 1.3 billion people living in China and Chinese children accounted for one fifth of the total number of children in the world. The Chinese Government had always attached great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child and was actively involved in relevant international cooperation. It had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991 and its Optional Protocol on sale of children, child prostitution and pornography in 2002. Among other legislative and administrative measures, the Chinese Government had formulated in 1992 and 2001 a series of guidelines for implementing the Convention and protecting the rights of the child in the area of health, education, legal protection, and the environment.

62. China considered international cooperation crucial to promoting the rights of the child. In July 2004, the Chinese Government, in cooperation with the office of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in China, had organized a seminar on the questionnaire transmitted to governments by the Independent Expert on violence against children and had provided the United Nations with a detailed reply.

Ms. Kusorghbor (Ghana), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

63. **Mr. Seoung-Hyun Moon** (Republic of Korea) said that his Government had established a national committee for the coordination of policies on children. The committee was open to civil society participation and was mandated to coordinate the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Integrating that rights-based approach into the traditional focus on the healthy development of

children constituted significant progress with regard to the child policies of the Republic of Korea. The Government of Korea had adopted various measures intended to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation, including, for instance, a provision sparing children the agony of having to give testimony repeatedly during criminal investigations and court proceedings. Korea had also ratified the two Optional Protocols to the CRC.

64. The Republic of Korea shar d the concern, expressed in the Secretary-General's report on the comprehensive assessment of the United Nations system response to children affected by armed conflict (A/59/331), that, compared to other problems related to children's survival, that issue had not been received sufficient attention. In that regard, Korea hoped that all competent United Nations bodies would fully implement the recommendations contained in that report and, inter alia, welcomed the decision of the Secretary-General to streamline the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

65. **Mr. Sallam** (Saudi Arabia) said that his Government ascribed great importance to the promotion of the rights of the child on the basis of the teachings of the Koran and the traditions of his country and to the consolidation of the family as the nucleus and pillar of society. According to Article 10 of the Constitution of Saudi Arabia, the State should strengthen family bonds in order to create an environment conducive to improving the physical and intellectual development of the members of society. In that regard, in 1997 Saudi Arabia had adhered to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) with a view to ensuring the enjoyment of the rights of Saudi Arabian children, provided that the rights were compatible with the provisions of the sharia. A year later, it had established a national committee to coordinate programmes and projects in favour of children in order to protect their rights.

66. The Government and the public institutions played an important role in the area of education, health, social services and recreational activities aimed at children. In Saudi Arabia, education was free of charge for all children, including children with special needs, and primary education was compulsory. A programme of study on cultural and social development services had been established to enable children to develop fully and acquire knowledge that would allow them to play an active role in society. Food was distributed to schoolchildren and they were looked after on physical and psychological matters.

67. Lastly, regarding the rights of the child, mention should be made of the destruction, deaths and suffering inflicted on Palestinian children in the occupied territories. In that connection, Saudi Arabia appealed to the international community, asking it to ensure respect for the rights of Palestinian children under the CRC.

68. **Ms. Faye** (Senegal) said that her Government was committed to drawing up, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a new programme for the period 2002-2006 with a view to reducing child and maternal mortality by 20 percent and malnutrition by 25 percent, formulating an integrated approach to the development of the child in early childhood targeting 35 percent of children aged 3-6, building the capacity of parents and families to ensure the child's balanced development, guaranteeing universal access to quality education for children aged 7-12, promoting the rights and balanced development of adolescents, eliminating the worst forms of child labour and combating sexual exploitation and violence against children, promoting the integration of children's and women's rights in the development policies and supporting an integrated approach to the rehabilitation and development of the Casamance region.

69. The Government of Senegal had used its institutional capacity to analyze the problems affecting Senegalese children, based on the principles of general non-discrimination, on the idea that the interests of the child were paramount in relation to the practices and decisions of the family and the community, on the right to life, on ensuring the child's survival and balanced development and on the need to listen to the child, in order to contribute to the implementation of the CRC.

70. Senegal allocated 40 percent of the State budget to education. The enrolment of girls had increased from 47.5 percent in 1992 to 68 percent in 2002 and 72 percent in 2003 and the next short-term target was 90 percent. Not a single case of polio had been reported in the country in the past three years and the number of children vaccinated against other diseases in the remotest areas had increased from 19 percent to 60 percent in some regions and from 39 percent to 70 percent in others. Furthermore, the Government combated resolutely child mendicancy, female genital

mutilation (FGM), HIV/AIDS and violence against children in all its forms.

71. **Mr. Al-Hebsi** (United Arab Emirates) said that his delegation welcomed the measures taken in many countries to protect the rights of children and meet their vital needs but was deeply concerned about millions of children in the developing countries. They lived in tragic conditions and their basic human rights were violated as a result of armed conflicts, violence, foreign occupation and extreme poverty. Many were displaced, deprived of education or suffering from serious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS. Moreover, they were victims of sexual exploitation, trafficking and recruitment for wars in many areas in the world. Accordingly, attaining the goals set at the special session on children, which had called for a "World Fit for Children", required stepping up international efforts to arrive at just and permanent solutions to the problems aggravating the conditions in which those children lived. That implied providing the financial resources necessary for development, finding political solutions to disputes, ending foreign occupation, and implementing the resolutions and recommendations of international conferences on development in the poor and developing countries and countries emerging from conflicts.

72. The government of the United Arab Emirates attached great importance to children's welfare and to the protection of their rights. Since the country had become a party to the CRC in 1997, the Government had been committed to its implementation through its competent bodies, by collaborating with civil society and in accordance with the Islamic traditions and the country's cultural heritage. Rules and laws had been laid down to ensure the safety of children and protect them against all forms of exploitation. Under those provisions, kidnapping, assault and torture of children constituted serious crimes and were subject to maximum punishment. The UNICEF report 2003 had recognized the country's achievements in relation to the measures taken for the protection of the rights of the child, and in particular the work of the Higher Council for Childhood and Maternity, established by presidential decree to regulate government and private efforts on child welfare and coordinate them with the activities of related regional and international organizations. Since a child's welfare could not be achieved without the mother's, the programmes and plans for children's welfare were merged with those aimed at the advancement of women and the family as a whole.

73. With regard to the enjoyment and protection of the rights of the child in the United Arab Emirates, it should first be noted that education was mandatory at primary level for both sexes and free at all levels, including kindergarten and higher education. The government attached high priority to the development of the curriculum and the methodology of teaching, which was based on a strategy for education up to the year 2020 that encompassed the promotion of self-learning, the use of information, communication technology and environmental awareness. It also provided specialized learning services for children with learning disabilities and for gifted children. Until 2003, the Government's investment in education had amounted to Dirham 5.5 billion or 25.6 percent of total federal government spending. Second, the government had succeeded, through numerous mother and child health care centres, in reducing infant mortality to 6.57 per 1,000 livebirths. Through intensive preventive medicine and immunization, polio was eradicated in 2001. The next target was the elimination of measles by 2005. Third, specialized centres for the physically and mentally disabled had been established, with programmes designed to educate the disabled and enhance their skills in order to reintegrate them into society. The Government provided social and financial support for the families of the disabled. Fourth, juvenile laws and regulations in accordance with CRC had been enacted and a policy of rehabilitation implemented, aimed at preparing juvenile delinquents for a normal life.

74. The delegation of the United Arab Emirates was deeply concerned over the tragic conditions under which Palestinian children lived in the occupied Palestinian territory as a result of the aggression inflicted by the Israeli occupying power. They suffered from poverty and serious diseases due to deteriorating economic conditions, caused by Israel's policies of closure, destruction, and violations of international humanitarian law and international conventions. Therefore, the United Arab Emirates appealed to the international community to speed up its efforts to ensure a just, comprehensive, and permanent solution to the Palestinian problem; and to take the necessary measures to implement development programmes in the developing countries and the countries emerging

from conflicts in order to save the children from violence, poverty and oppression.

75. **Mr. Atia** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) recalled that the document entitled "A World Fit for Children", adopted at the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly in 2002, had stressed the need to break the vicious circle of poverty and child victimization and to eliminate barriers and practices that jeopardized children's physical and psychological integrity. It should be acknowledged that the efforts made had fallen short of the aspirations expressed through the commitments made by the international community in recent years; and that serious violations of the rights of children, violence against them and related abuses, such as prostitution and pornography, continued. Children were more exposed to the effects of wars and conflicts, foreign occupation and economic sanctions, as it was flagrant in images - disseminated by the media - of Palestinian children harassed by Israeli soldiers, deprived of food and medicines, witnessing the assassination of their parents and suffering horrors that constituted violations of international humanitarian law and of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Protocols. The international community should not evade its responsibility but put an end to those crimes.

76. One could not be oblivious to the situation of African children. In Africa, the other problems that could afflict children were compounded by poverty, malnutrition and AIDS. The loss of lives from AIDS, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, was comparable to the effects of a weapon of mass destruction. In fact, disease was a weapon that killed children quietly, in the privacy of their home. There was no hope for humanity while poverty, hunger and ignorance reigned. Alleviating the situation of children required more international cooperation and resources.

77. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was one of the signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention No. 182 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. In June 2004, it had adhered to the Optional Protocol to the CRC Protocol on sale of children, child prostitution and pornography and ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRC on children's participation in armed conflicts. Libyan legislation protected the rights of the child and provided for the imprisonment of child abusers. School attendance was obligatory and parents that prevented the children from attending school were punished. Health care was free of charge. Nevertheless, Libyan children had been the immediate victims of the economic sanctions imposed on the country. Moreover, many children had died or been maimed by mines left behind by the colonial powers. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya called upon the international community not to allow a repetition of unjust sanctions such as those that the country had suffered.

78. **Mr. Dhakal** (Nepal) recalled that survival, protection, development and welfare of the children had been the primary goals of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and said that Nepal, a party to the Convention, was fully committed to protecting and promoting rights of children. On the other hand, children were victims of poverty, illiteracy, diseases and armed conflicts worldwide. Although some progress had occurred, those problems were as daunting as ever. The international community needed to redouble its efforts to improve the status of children, and the United Nations had a pivotal role to play in that endeavour.

79. Although special attention children-specific issues was necessary, they could not be divorced from broader development challenges, which had a direct impact on children. Managing to halve poverty and provide universal access to primary education by 2015 was a daunting challenge. Despite their resolve to develop good policies and plans, the financial and technical capacity of developing countries, particularly least developed countries (LDCs), such as Nepal, required additional international financial and technical assistance, if those countries were to achieve the goals of their national action plans for children.

80. While the CRC imposed on its States parties legal obligations, the Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A World fit for Children" and the Millennium Declaration provided a global framework for the development of children within specific time frames. Of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), seven directly affected the rights of children. The multi-dimensional nature of children's problems required coherent and concerted efforts at the national, regional and international levels. Nepal appreciated the endeavour of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to build a common platform for action in order to achieve the agreed international goals and supported the efforts of the United Nations in relation

to developing action plans for children; strengthening national planning, coordination, implementation and allocation of resources at the national scale; integrating the national goals in the national policies and plans; and building the capacity of national institutions responsible for protecting and promoting the rights of the child.

81. Nepal's 1990 Constitution guaranteed the protection of the rights and interests of the child and prohibited human trafficking, serfdom and forced labour. The 1992 Law on Children stipulated measures for safeguarding the rights of the child in line with the CRC. The 1999 Law on Child Labour prohibited the employment of minors under 16. Moreover, the Civil Code contained various provisions protecting the interests of the child. At the same time, Nepal had ratified the Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) No. 138 concerning Minimum age for Admission to Employment and No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Currently, a master plan was being prepared with a view to eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2007 and all forms of child labour by 2010; and a strategic plan had been adopted for dealing with seven key categories of child-workers: workers under conditions of slavery, scavengers, carriers, house servants, miners, rug-makers, trafficked girls and children exploited sexually or as labour.

82. Various institutions had been set up, including the Ministry for Women, Children and Social Welfare, the National Commission for Human Rights, the Commission for Women, and Minors' sections in District courts. There was a central Child Welfare Board and local welfare boards in 75 districts. At the international level, Nepal had submitted the second and third reports to the CRC Committee in combined form. Nepal was a party to the Convention of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) on prevention and combating trafficking in women and children for prostitution and to the SAARC Convention on regional arrangements for the promotion of children's welfare in South Asia.

83. In recent years, despite the country's difficult situation and thanks to the ninth five-year (1997-2002) development plan, child mortality, mortality of children under five and maternal mortality had decreased, the girls' primary-school enrolment rate had increased and more than 90 percent of all children were vaccinated. The tenth five-year (2002-2007) development plan aimed at poverty reduction through broad-based economic growth, infrastructure development and social inclusion. Various programmes had been undertaken in the areas of education, health, safe drinking water and sanitation, and rural development. The literacy rate was expected to increase to 63 per cent. Another objective of the plan was free primary education for all, free textbooks to girl students and scholarships for lower-caste (dalit) and disadvantaged children.

84. Despite Nepal's determined efforts, children continued to suffer from poverty, illiteracy and malnutrition. The current insurgency staged by the Maoists has further deteriorated the situation. His Majesty's Government has declared schools "zones of peace" and was committed to protecting the life and property of people and providing safety and security to them. Nepal needed additional financial and technical cooperation from the international community to complement national efforts towards improving the situation of children. Concerted international efforts and cooperation were needed for the implementation of the commitments made by the international community in the past. The United Nations should continue to reinforce cooperation with Member states in order to attain the MDGs and implement the plan of action adopted at the special session of the General Assembly on children.

85. **Mr. Gansukh** (Mongolia) noted that two years had passed since the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on Children had adopted by consensus the outcome document entitled "A World Fit for Children". Mongolia attached particular importance to children's issues and made every effort to implement the principles, goals and actions set forth in the declaration and plan of action. Following the special session, in December 2002, the Government of Mongolia had adopted its second national programme for the development and protection of children; the first one had been implemented in the 1990s. The programme, whose mission was to create an enabling legal environment for protecting the rights and welfare of children, promote their self-development and participation and improve their education and health care, included performance indicators and an estimation of funding requirements and sources. An innovative element compared to earlier programmes was the Government's commitment to contribute

togrogs 8.0 billion or about 60 percent of the initial stage funding.

86. In past years, particular attention had been paid to the formulation and implementation of child-centred and child-friendly policies and programmes. The Government had adopted and was successfully implementing a programme for the prevention of juvenile crimes and crimes against children; national programmes on basic education, distance education, on teacher training and further training, inclusive education, reproductive health and comprehensive management of children's diseases; en extended programme of immunization; a breastfeeding policy; and a national gender-equality programme. Since the family was the basic unit of society and the environment of the child's early development, the Parliament had adopted a State policy on family development in 2003 and a State policy on population development in 2004 and had declared 2004 the year of the promotion of family development in Mongolia.

87. The creation of a propitious legal environment was evidently crucial to the development of the child. Accordingly, Mongolia had launched a far-reaching legal reform and adopted a new Constitution in 1992. Upon becoming a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the country had begun to amend legal provisions concerning children. In 1996, the Parliament had enacted a law on the protection of the rights of the child and, currently, of the 300 and laws that formed the legal corpus of the country, 60 referred to children and contained 350 provisions on their rights. Moreover, in 2004 the Parliament had approved a law against domestic violence.

88. Mongolia had chosen the road of democracy and reform and ascribed great importance to the promotion of the child's autonomous development and active participation in forging the world that it would inherit. Since the special session on children, Mongolia had been the first country to organize a broad-based meeting on children on the theme of "Listening to children and promoting their participation", participants to which had included 600 representatives of children's organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), public institutions, the Parliament and United Nations agencies. The event had offered an opportunity to evaluate the progress in implementing the second national programme and to present important recommendations for promoting the children-related issues.

89. Despite those efforts, much remained to be done in order to provide children with a better future. Many of the problems and challenges that Mongolia faced, particularly poverty alleviation, the reduction of maternal and child mortality and malnutrition and the improvement of the quality of education appeared in the first national report on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that Mongolia had submitted in October 2004. In view of the numerous problems faced by the international community, which were of key importance for humanity's future and to which the protection and development of children were central, Mongolia stressed the importance of the full enjoyment of the rights to education and health care and of the elimination of child labour. It was necessary to build on the momentum provided by the special session in order to promote further the rights of children and to build a better world for future generations.

90. **Mr. Koubaa** (Tunisia) said that the international community had repeatedly denounced the non-implementation of existing standards regarding the protection of the rights of the child in areas of conflict and that, according to the relevant report of the Secretary-General, the situation of children continued to be precarious in many regions of the world, particularly in Africa. The tragic situation of unaccompanied refugee minors, to whom the Geneva conventions should apply, also gave cause for concern. Regarding children in the occupied Palestinian territories, it was essential to guarantee their security and well-being and implement the relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Geneva Convention concerning the protection of civilians in times of war. Tunisia urged the international community to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to Palestinian children and their families. At the same time, it was necessary to build the capacities of United Nations mechanisms and civil society organizations (CSOs) in order to rehabilitate children affected by armed conflicts.

91. At the national level, the Government of Tunisia had taken various measures for the protection of children, based on the values and principles of CRC and its Optional Protocols. The measures included the development of a plan of action and a national strategy in favour of the child, the adoption of a child protection code, the implementation of the mechanisms necessary for its application, and the development of a

national plan for children for the period 2002-2010 based on the commitments made under CRC, the World Declaration on the survival, protection and development of children and the declaration in the document entitled "A World Fit for Children". At regional level, Tunisia had hosted in January 2004 a high-level Arab conference on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, which had discussed the formulation of an Arab strategy for children that would serve as a model for national plans of action.

92. **Mr. Tesfu** (Ethiopia) said that his delegation strongly condemned any terrorist crime committed against children anywhere in the world. Ethiopia was pleased to note that progress had been made in the implementation of the outcome of the special session on children. However, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, civil strife, curable diseases and international terrorism still posed enormous challenges in relation to the welfare of children.

93. Ethiopia had been implementing the commitments made at various international fora, including the special session of the General Assembly on children and the Millennium Summit. It had ensured the distribution of the document entitled "A world fit for children" to all regional states in order to raise the awareness of regional authorities and facilitate its implementation through local programmes. The Government had also finalized a National plan of action for children (2003-2010), which covered four priority areas: health promotion, quality education, protection of children against abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS.

94. In the area of education, the primary schools' medium of instruction was the vernacular language of the children. The inclusion of civic education in primary and secondary education facilitated the development of children to become responsible citizens who appreciated the values of human rights, democracy, peace, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all peoples pursuant to the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Non-formal education had provided children in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas with access to basic-education that fitted their living condition and had contributed significantly to the ever-increasing participation of girls in education.

95. In the area of violence against children, the Criminal Code had been amended to penalize harmful traditional practices against children. The Government continued to prohibit the employment of underage children and in 2003 the Parliament had ratified the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The Optional protocol to CRC on sale of children, child prostitution and pornography had been submitted to the Council of Ministers in preparation of its ratification by the Parliament.

96. With respect to combating HIV/AIDS and its impact on children, priority intervention areas had been identified with a view to halting the transmission of the virus from mother to a child. Ethiopia was collaborating with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in setting up voluntary HIV/AIDS counselling and testing (VCT) centres in various regional states. Children who had lost their parents because of the virus received support in order to ensure their future participation in the development of the country. Lastly, it was essential to provide the necessary financial and technical support to the developing counties, which were striving to ensure that the world would be fit for children.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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Summary record of the 18th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 19 October 2004, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Kuchinsky ..... (Ukraine)
later: Ms. Astanah Banu (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Malaysia)

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04-56053 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 93: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.16 and L.17)

Introduction of draft decision A/C.3/59/L.16: Outcome of the ten-year review of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

1. **Mr. Ndimeni** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced the draft decision, explaining that its main purpose was to ensure that the Third Committee would pay attention to the outcome of the 2005 session of the Commission for Social Development. The ten-year review should not be used to reopen the commitments made during the Copenhagen Summit or the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, but rather to adopt practical measures that would be conducive to implementation.

Introduction of draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.17: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

2. **Mr. Rehren** (Chile), introducing the draft resolution, said that its main purpose was to promote implementation of the commitments made in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action and further initiatives for social development, as well as to reaffirm the commitment of the international community to speed up social development for all.

Agenda item 94 (a): Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.18)

Introduction of draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.18: Policies and programmes involving youth

3. **Ms. Carvalho** (Portugal) announced that Angola, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey and the United Kingdom had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution. The negotiations on the text should be concluded soon. The sponsors hoped that it would be adopted by consensus and with the widest support.

Agenda item 96: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.20 and L.22)

Introduction of draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.20: International law enforcement assistance network for combating the criminal misuse of information technologies

4. **Mr. Siv** (United States of America) introducing the draft resolution, said that it was aimed at expanding the coverage of the Cybercrime Point of Contact Network, which had been created to enhance traditional methods of assistance in crimes involving networked communications and related technologies.

Introduction of draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.22: Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity

5. **Mr. Cavallari** (Italy) said that Argentina, Belarus, Norway and Peru had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution. He stressed the need to strengthen the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in keeping with the recommendations set forth in the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/205). The draft resolution was intended to build upon and enhance the momentum of the entry into force of the Palermo Convention and its two Protocols and to ensure that the necessary resources were provided so that the Programme could respond to the new challenges and increasing demands for technical assistance. Although the text was largely based on the resolution adopted at the fifty-eighth session, some changes had been made so as to make it more effective and action-oriented. He hoped it would be adopted by consensus, with the broadest support possible.

Agenda item 97: International drug control (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.19)

Introduction of draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.19: International cooperation against the world drug problem

6. **Ms. Feller** (Mexico) said that Afghanistan, Belarus, Brazil, Panama, Singapore, South Africa and Tajikistan had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution. The sponsors had tried to propose a balanced text that would reflect the concerns of all countries, groups and regions and include the new challenges facing the international community as a result of the ongoing changes in the phenomenon of drug production, trafficking and abuse. Noting that informal consultations were still underway with a number of delegations, she said that she hoped the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

Agenda item 101: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/59/41 and Corr.1, A/59/184-S/2004/602, A/59/190, A/59/274 and A/59/331)

7. **Mr. Makanga** (Gabon) said that since ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1994, his country had carried out a large number of initiatives on behalf of children. His Government's determination to protect children was evident in the fact that it had recently enacted a law prohibiting trafficking in and exploitation of children in the national territory and was promoting bills on the creation of a children's parliament and a national observatory for the protection of the rights of the child.

8. In cooperation with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the Government had established a fund to help children orphaned by HIV/AIDS, as well as other vulnerable children. It had also participated in several regional meetings convened for the purpose of developing policies on behalf of such children.

9. Despite the progress made to date, children still lived in precarious conditions in many regions of the world, especially the developing countries, because of poverty, armed conflict and diseases such as HIV/AIDS. States and all those involved in promoting and protecting the rights of children must take urgent action to implement the commitments made under the relevant international conventions. That was how the rights of children must be protected, not just on paper.

10. *Ms. Astanah Banu (Malaysia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

11. **Ms. Hoch** (Liechtenstein) said that, as noted in the second national report of Liechtenstein on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the last five years clear progress had been made in the protection of children from sexual abuse by making the necessary adjustments in domestic law and setting up prevention and support mechanisms. Criminal law had been tightened with respect to sexual offences, the penalty for sexual abuse of minors had been increased, and child pornography and abuse abroad had been criminalized. The Liechtenstein Parliament had adopted a revision of the Code of Criminal Procedure which improved the protection of victims in criminal proceedings and took their interests better into account. Key points of the Victims' Protection Act were sensitive questioning, once-only testimony, and questioning by an expert. In 1999 an interdisciplinary expert group had been founded which served primarily as a contact point for professionals who were confronted with cases of sexual abuse and promoted relations and effective cooperation between existing assistance systems. Her delegation wanted to highlight the involvement of civil society and, in particular, of children and young people in the current revision of the Youth Act. The participation of young people would also be firmly enshrined in the revised Youth Act. At the same time, discussions on new forms of participation were taking place, as a result of which the Government had decided to delegate more young people to international and European conferences.

12. As her delegation had pointed out on other occasions, the discrepancy between existing norms and standards and their implementation was sobering. The Convention on the Rights of the Child enjoyed almost universal support; yet Member States and the international community had failed to live up to their promise to protect and promote the most fundamental right of the child, which was the right to life. According to data published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 30 000 children died every day of preventable causes. Supply of basic life-saving services and, in particular, adequate assistance to pregnant women and to mothers and their newborn children could save millions of lives.

13. The spread of armed conflict was another factor increasing the number of child deaths. The Report of the Secretary-General on the Comprehensive

assessment of the United Nations system response to children affected by armed conflict (A/59/331) showed that the United Nations system response was less then satisfying and had many shortcomings. The international community had to react and implement the recommendations resulting from the assessment. Above all, there had to be more institutional clarity regarding the responsibilities of different actors involved at United Nations Headquarters and in the field. Her delegation agreed that it was beneficial to have an independent advocate for children and armed conflict. The advocacy efforts undertaken by the special representative had helped to place the topic high on the international agenda, but the mandate had to be reformulated, giving a clearer indication of the tasks to be fulfilled by the office.

14. **Ms. Khalil** (Egypt) said that her delegation looked forward to the in-depth study on violence against children that was being prepared by the Secretary-General and hoped that it would cast light on the problem and be helpful in developing programmes and strategies to address it. Her delegation wished to draw attention to the initiatives that had been undertaken by Egypt in recent years to protect children and, in particular, to suppress violence against children. Article 29 of the Civil Code stated that human personality began at birth; thus, from the moment they were born, all children had the same rights to well-being and protection as adults. The Civil Code also defined the rights of human embryos. Law 12/1996, on childhood, outlined regulations to the law applicable to minors, in line with the relevant international instruments on the rights of the child.

15. The Egyptian National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other agencies had organized the Afro-Arab Expert Consultation on Legal Tools for the Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation, which had met in Cairo in June 2003. At that meeting, representatives of governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and civil society organizations had issued the Cairo Declaration for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, which recommended the adoption of legal measures to prohibit the practice. In 2003, in collaboration with the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood and a number of different stakeholders, the government had put underway the national plan on genital mutilation, with the aim of totally eliminating that practice. The project, which was designed especially to protect those segments of society in which genital mutilation was more likely to be practiced, was being carried out in the context of a comprehensive development plan which took into account social and cultural circumstances. In recent years, thanks to those activities, the practice had been eliminated in 120 villages. Another joint project was focused on drafting a major legislative text on the treatment of minors under 18 in the judicial system. Egypt's efforts in promoting and protecting the rights of the child were being carried out in the context of a review of domestic law to develop more detailed standards and include in the reference texts provisions on the protection of children who suffered violence.

16. With deep regret, her delegation found it necessary once again to denounce the desperate and increasingly serious situation of children in the occupied Palestinian territory, an issue that was not adequately covered in the reports submitted to the Committee. According to a recent news article, 13 Palestinian children had died during the first few days of Israeli army operations in Gaza. The data available to Palestinian human rights organizations showed a steady rise in the number of persons killed and wounded. Clearly, an army that killed so many children had no scruples nor did it understand human values. Her delegation urged the Committee to take the initiative in putting an end to military occupation against the Palestinian people so as to ensure that Palestinian children could fully enjoy their rights and live in safety. That would not be possible unless there was a full retreat from the occupied territories.

17. **Mr. Cumberbatch** (Cuba) said that well into the twenty-first century, the world's children were still suffering from disease, malnutrition, armed conflict, trafficking in persons, child prostitution, physical and sexual abuse, exploitation and uncertainty about the future. There was every indication that the world would not be able to achieve universal primary education by 2015, given that according to UNICEF data, one of every five school-age children was not attending primary school. Nor would the world reduce by two thirds the under-five mortality rate. Mortality was only slightly lower – 82 per 1,000 live births – than in 1998, when it had stood at 88; every year, 11 million children died from preventable or curable diseases. The final solution to those calamities was to change the unjust international order whereby all

production was concentrated in a few hands, and everybody else was excluded from any opportunity for improvement. A simple demonstration of political will to set aside a tiny share of the money that was wasted on wars and weapons would be enough to resolve the inequity, given that it cost 64 times more to train a soldier than to educate a school-age child.

18. Cuba welcomed the entry into force of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Cuba had signed both protocols; it had ratified the first one and was considering ratification of the second, in line with its policy of cooperation on human rights and its unwavering commitment to the progress of children. The problems facing the international community with regard to children's issues were not confined to one particular group of countries; consequently, the practice of drawing up lists of countries did not contribute to the common effort and only added an element of political manipulation and aggression against third countries.

19. Cuba had made remarkable progress in the provision of services for children in spite of the harsh economic blockade to which it had been subjected for over forty years, which only made it more difficult to gain access to medication, technology and social benefits. It was the height of nonsense and manipulation that measures ostensibly designed to bring democracy to the country should include an offer to immunize all children under five who had not yet been vaccinated against the main childhood diseases under the current health system. The United States authorities knew perfectly well that all Cuban children were vaccinated against 11 diseases before their second birthday – something that the United States itself did not do. Moreover, 100 per cent of Cuba's children had access to full health services, and the infant mortality rate had been reduced to six per 1,000 live births. The ratio of classroom teachers to children in primary schools was one teacher for 20 students, and classrooms of more than 20 students had two teachers. New art, theatre, dance and music schools had been opened in all the major cities. Special education programmes ensured that all children with disabilities who were able to study were taken care of. In 2003, in recognition of Cuba's longstanding efforts in the field of education, the country had been granted an Honourable Mention in the King Sejong Literacy Prize granted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Cuba was also cooperating effectively with UNICEF, which guaranteed ongoing and coordinated actions through programmes and projects carried out throughout the island.

20. **Mr. Hackett** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the future survival of mankind depended to a large extent on how policies to safeguard and nurture children were enacted and implemented. The Millennium Development Goals and the declaration emanating from the United Nations special session on children, held in 2002, placed heavy emphasis on ensuring the health, education and security of children through time-bound, action-oriented goals and targets. The United Nations had set a target date for reducing poverty, which particularly affected children, but present world trends cast doubt on the ability of countries to meet that target. It was also unlikely that they would meet the goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015, one of the Millennium Development Goals pertaining to children. The member States of CARICOM called for a re-commitment to the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, particularly their targets for domestic and international resource mobilization and investment in basic social and economic infrastructure, health, nutrition and education, which paid special attention to children. Developing countries needed concrete action and support to make those targets a reality. Nationally, it required universal access to social services and the commitment of all countries to the full implementation of the 20/20 Initiative called for at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995. Internationally, it required greater cooperation and assistance from the developed world for debt relief and reviving the Doha Development Agenda negotiations.

21. The small island developing States and low-lying coastal States, including those belonging to the Caribbean Community, experienced specific problems that particularly affected the most vulnerable persons in a society, the poor and children. It was therefore critical that the international community should continue to recognize the special circumstances of those States and pay heed to their calls for special assistance. On the question of priorities in the world, he stressed that in the view of CARICOM, although

security seemed to be considered more important than other problems facing mankind, a multidimensional approach must be undertaken that did not undermine efforts to achieve social and economic development.

22. In recent years, CARICOM had repeatedly stressed the need for urgent action in tackling the HIV/AIDS problem. The Caribbean region had a high rate of infection with that disease, which was devastating populations and orphaning thousands of children; in particular, there was a high level of mother-to-child transmission. For the CARICOM States, whose people were their greatest resource, the spectre of HIV/AIDS destroying its children and youth was daunting. The Caribbean Community wished to reiterate the pressing need internationally to devote more funds and attention to the issue. Governments in the region were striving to continue allocating additional financial resources to fighting AIDS, and they had national programmes to reduce the rates of mother-to-child transmission. Public education programmes had been started with the aid of UNICEF, governmental policies and NGO initiatives.

23. The Caribbean Community believed that education was the weapon for combating HIV/AIDS and other problems affecting children, such as the traffic in children. Education was not only a fundamental right, but also an investment and a tool for economic and social development. Throughout the region, both boys and girls were entitled to free primary and secondary education, and in the majority of cases, school attendance was mandatory between the ages of 5 and 16. Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which spoke explicitly of the responsibility of States to make education accessible to all children, had been given special attention by the countries of the region.

24. **Mr. Samet** (Algeria) said that, in the view of his delegation, making the world fit for children would constitute a significant contribution towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals. The Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the special session on children should be implemented in the context of coordinated follow-up to the agendas of other major international conferences and summits. In his discussion of progress in the four major goal areas of the Declaration and Plan of Action (A/59/274) – promoting healthy lives; providing quality education; protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS –, the Secretary-General had acknowledged that although there had been some success, especially in terms of the implementation nationally and regionally of action plans on behalf of children, much remained to be done.

25. Indeed, in many respects, children were still in a precarious and even distressing situation in several parts of the world, especially Africa. If the millions of children who still lived in subhuman conditions were to live in dignity, their economic and social rights must be taken into account, and they must be able to enjoy the right to development. It bore repeating that human rights also entailed access to education, health care, food, drinking water and proper housing. It was also important, however, to prevent warring factions from harming children and to put an end to the shameful practice of enlisting child soldiers. Drastic measures must be taken against the exploitation of children, especially sexual exploitation. His delegation wanted to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for the significant contribution he had made to publicizing the problems of children affected by armed conflict, including children living under foreign occupation, especially in Palestine and the occupied Arab territories.

26. Algeria had allocated substantial resources and had make tremendous efforts to promote the fundamental rights of children through comprehensive and well-coordinated intersectoral action plans designed to reduce child mortality, improve child nutrition, promote universal access to primary education and provide assistance to children living in difficult circumstances. With regard to the fulfilment of its obligations, he said that Algeria had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. His Government had duly submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and would be submitting its next one in 2005. It had completed the Secretary-General's questionnaire on violence against children. In conclusion, he stressed that Algeria, which had played an active role in the process leading up to the United Nations special session on children, would spare no effort to implement the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at that session.

27. **Ms. Pham Thi Kim Anh** (Viet Nam) said that her delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the delegation of Malaysia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The continuous attention focused on the rights of the child

since the World Summit on Children had been heightened with the adoption of the document entitled "A World Fit for Children" at the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children. The special session had identified the areas in which efforts should be focused by the international community to ensure better protection of the rights of children and their development, and it had given new impetus to national and international initiatives in favour of children.

28. Viet Nam had always given priority to the implementation of the rights of children and was earnestly carrying out its international commitments. To date, Viet Nam had made significant progress towards realizing its goals, as noted in the mid-term review for the 2004 regular session of UNICEF, which stated that Viet Nam enjoyed relative equality in health and education. Indeed, 100 per cent of the provinces and cities of Viet Nam were providing primary education, illiteracy had been wiped out, 95 per cent of children were enrolled in primary school at the right age, the mortality rate in children under five had been reduced to 42 per 1,000 live births, 93.3 per cent of children under one year old had been vaccinated with six vaccines, polio had been eradicated, and 70 per cent of orphaned children had been given care by the community.

29. Turning to the issue of children and armed conflict, she said that her delegation was concerned about the serious situation of children in many parts of the world. Children were the primary victims of armed conflicts, in which many were killed, orphaned and abducted, or deprived of education, health care and other fundamental rights. Furthermore, children were the ones who suffered most in post-conflict situations. Her delegation therefore welcomed the decision to establish a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism for children affected by armed conflict, and would like to express its support for the important work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

30. Viet Nam was strongly committed to promote, protect and care for children and had made efforts in that regard. However, owing to the country's low level of economic development, there were still major impediments to the realization and promotion of the rights of children, such as trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, and HIV/AIDS, a disease that affected more than 250,000 children. With the valuable support of UNICEF and other international partners, the Government of Viet Nam was doing its utmost to solve those problems by carrying out rights-based programmes, giving priority to the protection of particularly vulnerable children and setting up a juvenile justice system.

31. **Ms. Helal** (Canada), speaking on behalf also of Australia and New Zealand, said that the three countries placed the highest priority on promoting and protecting the rights of the child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols were fundamental to the realization of those rights. It was not enough to carry out targeted actions, but it was also important to mainstream child rights within all activities, at both the international and national levels, and incorporate a gender perspective in all programmes and policies related to children, without neglecting children belonging to disadvantaged groups.

32. Priority must be given to reaffirming and advancing the rights of the child in debate at the United Nations in the framework of the omnibus resolution. However, Australia, Canada and New Zealand were concerned that the length and detail of the resolution was not conducive to advancing the rights of the child; its size limited consideration of new and critical issues. It should be thoroughly reviewed and streamlined in order to focus on urgent and central issues.

33. The Committee on the Rights of the Child played a key role in promoting more effective implementation of the Convention. Australia, Canada and New Zealand welcomed the efforts of the Committee to make its work more effective, including the discussion it had organized recently on implementing child rights in early childhood. They also welcomed the increase in the Committee's membership, allowing for more geographical representation as well as expertise. That would enable the Committee to take up its new tasks in monitoring the implementation of the Optional Protocols to the Convention.

34. Australia, Canada and New Zealand called on States Parties to fully cooperate with the Committee, including by honouring their reporting obligations. They supported efforts to strengthen monitoring, reporting and accountability for violations of children's rights in armed conflicts and to address the specific needs of the girl child. They encouraged close coordination with existing initiatives, such as those related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

They supported the work of United Nations agencies, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and his Office, and of non-governmental organizations. Efforts of all key stakeholders remained essential to combating violations of children's rights and ensuring adherence to relevant international law.

35. The newly released report of the Secretary-General on the comprehensive assessment of the United Nations system response to children affected by armed conflict would provide important guidance on how to address child protection in situations of armed conflict in a sustainable and coordinated way. Stressing the importance of Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), she said that Australia, Canada and New Zealand encouraged Member States that had not done so to ratify without delay the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which contained crucial provisions criminalizing serious acts against children.

36. Australia, Canada and New Zealand continued to be deeply concerned at the continuing sexual exploitation of children, including trafficking, prostitution, pornography and sexual abuse, and wished to express their support for the work of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Measures at the international, regional and national levels to combat such crimes, prosecute the perpetrators and protect the rights of the victims were critical.

37. Violence against children was a complex problem demanding an urgent response. Australia, Canada and New Zealand fully supported the work of the independent expert, Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, in conducting an in-depth study of the issue. They trusted that the recommendations of the study would include effective remedies and both preventive and rehabilitative measures at the national and international levels.

38. Australia, Canada and New Zealand were taking concrete steps to implement the agenda set forth in the document "A World Fit for Children". In early 2004, Canada had completed its plan of action as follow-up to the United Nations special session on children, entitled "A Canada Fit for Children". The plan was a result of consultations involving stakeholder groups from all of Canada's geographic areas, governments, aboriginal organizations and children and youth. Other domestic priorities for Canada included the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care, under which governments were working to improve access to affordable, quality, regulated early learning and child care programmes and services. Canada was taking steps to fight child poverty and promote early development through the National Child Benefit and the Early Childhood Development Agreement. A number of legislative and law enforcement initiatives had been undertaken to protect children from exploitation, and preparations were underway to hold a North American consultation in 2005 on the United Nations study on violence against children which would include the active participation of children and youth, both in the preparatory process and at the consultation.

39. While New Zealand was doing well by international standards on the rights of the child, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child had identified areas where improvement could be made in 2003. In response, New Zealand had developed the Convention on the Rights of the Child work programme, and in 2004 had released an updated work programme spanning five years of activity (2004–2008). It addressed 50 issues in direct response to the Committee's 2003 recommendations on the Convention and on the Optional Protocol on child soldiers. Within that framework, New Zealand was actively progressing towards the lifting of reservations to the Convention. In addition, New Zealand had just submitted its response to the request for information for the study on violence against children.

40. Australia was currently finalizing its National Plan of Action for Children and Young People in response to "A World Fit for Children", in consultation with children and young people, governments and the non-governmental sector. It was also working towards increased coordination of policies and services for children and their families, with a particular focus on prevention and early intervention approaches. To that end, Australia was developing a National Agenda for Early Childhood to maximize the impact of existing activity and inform future investments to ensure resources were directed to priority issues. Four broad action areas had been proposed for national attention: healthy young families, early learning and care, supporting parents and families, and child-friendly communities. Australia, New Zealand and Canada

continued to cooperate with other countries through their respective regional organizations on the important issues of smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and related transnational crime, including the issue of trafficking of children and child sex tourism. Although the challenges were daunting, the three countries wished to reiterate their commitment to working with other Member States and the United Nations system in finding the most effective ways to enhance the rights of all children.

41. **Dr. Kyaw Win** (Myanmar) said that the delegation of Myanmar wished to align itself with the statement made by the representative of Malaysia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Quoting the words of the representative of Myanmar at the thirty-sixth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, he said that children enjoyed a special place in Myanmar and were regarded as "jewels" of society. Because of the extended family pattern which was predominant among Myanmar families, children were nurtured not only by their parents, grandparents and relatives but also by their respective communities. For that reason, the Union of Myanmar had readily acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. It had promulgated the Child Law in 1993 and was implementing it with a firm intention to promote and protect the rights of children in the country.

42. When Madame Sadako Ogata had first visited Myanmar as an independent expert for the United Nations in 1989, she had written clearly that what she had seen in Myanmar was in some ways "a model society". The official recognition of Myanmar's efforts had come about on 4 June 2004, when the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in its report had acknowledged many positive developments, including the creation of the National Human Rights Committee in 2000; the adoption of rules and regulations related to the Child Law in 2001; the creation of the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation in 2003, whose mandate included promotion and protection of the rights of the child; the establishment of the National AIDS Programme and the joint programme for HIV/AIDS Myanmar 2001–2005; the National Health Plan 1996–2001, which had achieved high immunization coverage for a significant part of the population; the Education for All national action plans; and the Joint Plan of Action for the elimination of forced labour with the International Labour Organization (ILO). Myanmar thanked the Committee for acknowledging those advances amidst various preposterous allegations circulated by expatriate dissidents and splinter groups of former insurgent organizations that remained out in the cold for various reasons. Now that their military campaigns against the Union were no longer significant without the foot soldiers who had gone home to be peacefully resettled in their own States, the main strategy of those groups had been to turn to a war of propaganda utilizing the ample amounts of funds available to them under the umbrella of politically motivated non-governmental organizations.

43. Myanmar was clearly no longer a country in armed conflict, and it was turning a blind eye to reality to include Myanmar on the list of countries in such a situation. However, the Government was taking no chances and had formed a high-level Committee for the Prevention of the Recruitment of Child Soldiers on 5 January 2004 and had recently allowed the Resident Representative of UNICEF in Myanmar to observe first-hand the recruitment process of the all-volunteer Myanmar Armed Forces.

44. Myanmar regretted that the European Union had imposed diplomatic and economic sanctions on Myanmar that were not compatible with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which had been ratified by the European Union and by Myanmar. Article 2.2 of the Convention clearly stated that States Parties should take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child was protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians or family members. However, the list of names in the current visa bans on senior officers of the Myanmar Government included not only children but also a few grandchildren, some not yet of school age. It was an irony that the European Union, as an advocate of human rights, should be violating one of its own most important conventions.

45. Although it was true that nothing could be done overnight, Myanmar had given an inexorable momentum to its efforts to promote and protect the rights of its children. The recent introduction of human rights education into the curricula of basic education for middle schools and high schools was a testament to Myanmar's ambition that those children should grow up in a world where there was universal respect for

human rights, in keeping with Myanmar's longstanding tradition and culture.

46. **Ms. Abeysekera** (Sri Lanka) said that Sri Lanka's position with regard to children had been in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child even before it had been ratified. The general situation of children in the country had improved, including through free education and health care and subsidized food. Building on that foundation, Sri Lanka's incorporation of the Millennium Development Goals into its development strategy would help to create the environment necessary for further implementation of the Convention. Among other things, Sri Lanka had made education compulsory from ages 5 to 14, and it had carried out extensive skills training programmes, conducted immunization programmes in schools and clinics, and raised the minimum employment age to 14, thus bringing child labour rates down from 8 per cent in 1996 to 0.7 per cent in 2002.

47. Sri Lanka was a party to all the ILO conventions on child labour and their protocols, and the Penal Code had provisions against child abuse and cruelty to children and trafficking. The National Child Protection Authority was the main agency responsible for conducting investigations and enforcing the relevant laws, organizing training and awareness programmes, enforcing regulations and collaborating with UNICEF. A number of non-governmental organizations were also involved in protecting children's rights, and the media had broadcast awareness campaigns among the public.

48. The efforts of the Government and civil society of Sri Lanka to improve the situation of children in the country were faced with the recurring problem of the recruitment of child soldiers by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Despite all the promises and peace talks, and the fact that LTTE had signed with the Government of Sri Lanka the Action Plan for children affected by war, UNICEF and other organizations, including the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, had reported that the situation had not improved. Her delegation strongly felt that the international community should pressure organizations such as LTTE to stop that practice.

49. In keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration and the Plan of Action of "A World Fit for Children", the Government of Sri Lanka had launched a National Plan of Action for the Children of Sri Lanka 2004–2008. With the help of UNICEF, Save the Children and a leading Sri Lankan non-governmental organization, it had obtained the participation and inputs of children between the ages of 4 and 18, including those with disabilities and street children, in determining the content of the Plan. The main objective of the Plan was to create opportunities for Sri Lanka's children in an environment that was safe and conducive to their overall development and to integrate interventions on behalf of children into the country's broader policies, while ensuring their consistency with Sri Lanka's cultural values, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Plan covered action in regard to child development, education, health care, water supply, child protection, child labour and juvenile justice, and recognized that children needed to grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had congratulated the Government of Sri Lanka for the Plan and had pledged support for it.

50. **Mr. Sin Song Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation had taken note of the reports of the Secretary-General on the Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/59/190) and on Follow-up to the United Nations special session on children (A/59/274). He commended the efforts of the international organizations, including UNICEF, in the protection and promotion of children's rights and welfare. He welcomed the proposal of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to consider the reports of States parties in two parallel chambers, in order to improve its working methods.

51. His delegation considered it most important to draw up clear policies to put into practice once and for all the commitments undertaken in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the special session of the General Assembly on children and other major international conferences and set up the necessary institutional mechanisms for the protection and promotion of the rights of the child. Each country should pursue a child policy suitable to its specific situation and requirements, while keeping its international commitments.

52. It was always the vulnerable groups, in particular children, who were most affected by economic sanctions and blockades arising from interference in the domestic affairs of a country, as well as military occupation, armed conflict, racism and xenophobia.

The child issue must not be abused for political purposes. International cooperation and solidarity were crucial, and international organizations, including UNICEF, should assume greater responsibility by joining in the efforts of governments to protect and promote children's rights.

53. The Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea gave high priority to children and had enacted laws on education and child rearing which incorporated the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite the natural disasters the country had suffered in recent years and the economic sanctions and blockades it had been suffering for more than half a century, the Government provided free education and health care to all children. It had and would continue to take measures to improve their situation, in keeping with the objectives of the document "A World Fit for Children". The Committee on the Rights of the Child had considered the second report of the Government in June 2004.

54. **Dr. Tan Kee Kwong** (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that ASEAN priorities for children had been placed on the regional agenda as an outcome of the Third Meeting of ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Social Welfare held in 1993. Subsequently, the main instruments adopted in that respect had been the Hanoi Plan of Action, adopted in 1998, the first in a series of plans of action to implement ASEAN Vision 20/20; the Declaration of Commitments on Children, in 2001; and the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali II). All of those instruments addressed children's concerns, particularly their survival, protection and development; combating trafficking in, and crimes of violence against, women and children; full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which all ASEAN countries were parties; promoting a gentler, safer and more caring environment for children through strengthening families; seeking the active involvement of all sectors of society in economic development; and including children's issues and concerns in regional integration processes. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations was currently preparing the Vientiane Action Programme as the successor plan to the Hanoi Plan of Action. It was expected that the Plan would be adopted by the ASEAN Heads of State or Government at the Tenth Summit, to be held in Lao People's Democratic Republic on 29 November 2004.

55. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations had been working with UNICEF to address priorities identified in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Declaration of Commitments on Children and the document "A World Fit for Children". It had submitted to UNICEF a proposal to develop a multidisciplinary framework for child abuse and child neglect. The United Nations Children's Fund was providing technical assistance for the ASEAN project on early childhood care and development and was organizing regular East Asia and Pacific ministerial consultations to assess progress achieved in the area in meeting the goals set by the World Summit on Children.

56. **Ms. Asmady** (Indonesia) said the document "A World Fit for Children" had set a basis for the Government to advance children's rights in the national development programme. In commemoration of National Children's Day, the Government had launched the National Programme for Children in Indonesia 2015, which covered the key issues of child health and nutrition, HIV/AIDS, early childhood care and development, basic education and protection against abuse. With regard to protection, she said that following the enactment of the Child Protection Act in 2002, a National Committee on Child Protection had been established to ensure implementation of the Act. Three national action plans were currently underway to fight the worst forms of child labour, commercial sexual exploitation of children and trafficking in women and children. At the regional level, the Government of Indonesia, working closely with the International Organization for Migration and with the participation of ASEAN and Australia, had supported a number of joint measures to combat the sexual exploitation of children in the region.

57. On health issues, she said that efforts were being made to reduce maternal and infant mortality and malnutrition, combat HIV/AIDS, encourage vaccination and immunization and provide basic health care in all districts. Under education, Indonesia's Law No. 20/2003, on the national education system, underlined the importance of education for all in the overall development programme of the country and stipulated the considerable budget allocations that had to be made to support the nine-year compulsory education programme and provide financial support for low-income families to send their children to school.

Finally, the Government was considering the recommendations and observations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the second periodic report of Indonesia, with a view to integrating them into national strategies.

58. **Ms. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that poverty, malnutrition, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, discrimination in all its forms, armed conflict and terrorism had become daily occurrences in the lives of children. Her delegation wished to pay tribute to the memory of the school children of Beslan and all innocent victims of conflicts. According to UNICEF statistics, every year 11 million children died before their fifth birthday because of the lack of basic services. To deal with the deterioration of health care and rising infant and maternal morbidity and mortality rates, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire had put underway, in collaboration with UNICEF and with financing from the European Union, a 15-month project aimed at strengthening the capacity of health services in the districts most affected by the crisis by supplying equipment, medical supplies, vaccines and basic medicines; setting up dispensaries to provide prenatal care and birthing facilities; and distributing insecticide-impregnated mosquito nets. Polio vaccinations would be given as part of the 2004 measles vaccination campaign, in order to combat the new outbreak of that disease in the northern part of the country. The campaign, which was directed at children between 9 months and 14 years old, would soon be extended throughout the national territory.

59. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire had adopted a number of institutional and legal measures to combat child abductions and trafficking and exploitation of children. It had taken steps, inter alia, to provide the protection established in the Constitution for vulnerable groups and enforce the prohibition against the worst forms of child labour, as well as several provisions of the Penal Code against abduction of children and a bill on trafficking in children. At the regional and international levels, Côte d'Ivoire had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions 138 and 182, concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. It had also begun the process of ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and on the involvement of children in armed conflict. In addition, it had ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and had taken part in several meetings, including those held in Cotonou in 1998 and in Libreville and Lomé in February and May 2000, at which platforms of action had been adopted to combat cross-border trafficking of children. In September 2000, the Government had signed a bilateral cooperation agreement with Mali concerning the fight against child trafficking, and in August 2003, it had signed a cooperation agreement with the International Labour Office which had led to the creation of the Steering Committee which was responsible for coordinating efforts to combat child labour and providing follow-up on the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour.

60. The use of child soldiers was a new form of child labour that turned children into both actors and victims of wars and armed conflict. In recent years, such conflicts had cut off the lives of two million children and left another four million mutilated; one million children had been orphaned, and another 10 million were suffering the consequences of abduction, detention and death of their parents. It was therefore urgent to find a solution to that problem and reunite children with their families and society, so that they could once again laugh, play and enjoy their childhood.

61. **Ms. Kusorgbor** (Ghana) said that considering the disheartening situation of the world's children, as described by the Secretary-General in his second report on Follow-up to the United Nations special session on children, international cooperation must be increased, and resources must be pooled to implement the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Millennium Development Goals and the Declaration on "A World Fit for Children", in order to protect and promote the rights and the well-being of children. In that connection, Ghana welcomed the increasing role of regional mechanisms and the various collaborative efforts between countries and regional and international organizations in assessing regional challenges and defining appropriate regional responses. The collaboration between the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Secretariat of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and UNICEF had culminated in the publication of The Young Face of NEPAD, which elaborated on how the NEPAD initiatives could

complement the goals of a World Fit for Children and the Millennium Development Goals. It was also gratifying that a similar collaboration had resulted in the first monitoring report on the state of Africa's children and the establishment of a database on child-related indicators for Africa.

62. The Government of Ghana had undertaken several initiatives to improve the social and economic well-being of children, in fulfilment of its commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it had ratified in 1990. Several laws had been reformed to ensure the effective implementation of the fundamental human rights of children provided for in the Convention, the Children's Act had been promulgated in 1998, and a juvenile justice bill had been adopted. To ensure the effective integration of children's rights into national development policies, the lead governmental agencies in those matters (the Ghana National Commission on Children and the National Council for Women and Development) had been strengthened, an advocacy campaign had been initiated to sensitize the public about the need to counteract child trafficking and child migration, and capacity-building strategies had been implemented to financially empower women through the Women's Development Fund. In addition to its efforts to expand access to basic education and improve the quality of education, the Government was paying attention to the development of skills and strengthening collaboration with non-governmental organizations that worked to promote the cause of children.

63. The plight of thousands of children in conflict situations around the world should spur the international community to take concrete steps to alleviate their suffering. While Ghana recognized the commendable role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in addressing the issue, it wished to stress the need to comprehensively integrate the issue into the work of the relevant United Nations agencies and improve the level of coordination in the overall United Nations response.

64. **Mr. Tekle** (Eritrea) said that every human society was committed to its children and considered the satisfaction of their emotional, spiritual, moral and material needs as a cardinal duty and its highest social priority. Yet it was ironic that children had been the principal victims of the most egregious violations of human rights, including loss of identity and citizenship, child labour and military conscription, sexual exploitation, abduction, sale and slavery, genital mutilation and forced early marriage, as well as exposure to health hazards. There was a causal relationship between the violation of the human rights of children and poverty. The absence of adequate education and employment opportunities had made conscription to the regular military or other armed groups attractive, and human trafficking, debt bondage and other illicit activities possible.

65. During the liberation struggle, the motto of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) had been "Everything good for the children", and it had been practiced rigorously even during the grimmest years of extreme hardship and shortage. After independence, Eritrea had signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child almost immediately. Ever since, Eritrea's children and youth had been given priority in all the basic laws of the country, including the National Charter (1994), the macroeconomic policy (1996) and the Constitution (1997). The national policy and subsequent guidelines had ensured the translation of the provisions of those basic laws into reality.

66. Eritreans believed that a healthy and educated child guaranteed the future of the nation. To that end, the Government had embarked upon a preventive health care programme for children which was devised to protect from the most prevalent diseases that afflicted children in developing countries, including malaria, polio and tuberculosis. It was giving special attention to the prevention of the transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child and provided care for orphans victimized by the scourge. The Government was also committed to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals on child mortality and had institutionalized a credible immunization system.

67. The educational and health programmes of the Front during the years of struggle had been recognized as remarkable achievements which could be exemplary even for conflict-free countries. The commitment to education was only a continuation of that noble tradition. The Government was determined to provide equal educational opportunities in the periphery and in the capital and hoped that the day would soon come that children would be able to attend school in their own villages. To that end, the Government had made a detailed review of the educational system to enhance its accessibility and effectiveness.

68. The commitment of the Eritrean Government to the promotion and protection of the rights of children was also reflected in the firm position it had taken on the issue of violence against them. That commitment was reflected in numerous legal provisions that had been enacted since independence and the advocacy and awareness programmes that had been put in place by organizations like the National Union of Eritrean Women. Eritrea therefore welcomed the launching of the Secretary-General's study on violence against children as a positive development.

69. The cruel victimization of children by armed conflict, whether internal or external, was of special significance to Eritreans, who had suffered for more than 30 years because of the horrific destruction wrought on their country by enemy armies. Those armies had been armed by external powers, both eastern and western, with the most sophisticated and lethal weapons of destruction, some of which were outlawed by international humanitarian law. At present, those who had survived cluster bombs, napalm and nerve gas were being killed by landmines and unexploded ordnance. In addition, Eritrean children had, during the last aggression, been abducted by enemy soldiers and reportedly used as human minesweepers and human shields, and they had been forced to perform slave labour, while girls as young as 12 years old had been raped.

70. It was reported that over 20 million Africans, many of whom were children, had been killed by small arms and light weapons. The sale and trafficking of children, child labour, commercial sexual exploitation, child pornography and other illicit activities had assumed frightening proportions. It was reported by ILO that 240 million children still worked, 180 million were intolerably exploited, 8.4 million were trapped in human trafficking, and 22,000 children had died from work-related accidents. Poverty and underdevelopment, as well as the socioeconomic gap between the rich and poor countries, which was steadily increasing, were the primary causes for that situation, especially in the age of globalization. In that connection, Eritrea recognized with appreciation the good work being done by ILO and UNICEF, as well as other international organizations, in the effort to eliminate the violation of the rights of the child, particularly through awareness-raising and advocacy activities.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.